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ARTIST/EDUCATOR WALTER HOOD SELECTED TO CREATE CIVIL RIGHTS ART IN PUBLIC SQUARE PARK
“Witness Walls” Combines Sculpture With Iconic Photos From Library’s Civil Rights Reading Room

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 18, 2014 – The Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission ([Metro Arts](http://MetroArts.org)) today approved the selection of artist Walter Hood to create new public art commemorating the city’s role in the historic Civil Rights Movement in Public Square Park downtown.

Hood’s design, “Witness Walls,” is a set of fragmented sculptural walls – inspired by the classical sculpted friezes commemorating heroic and mythical events in antiquity – creating a dynamic visual field as a visitor moves closer, further or among the walls. Walking among the walls places visitors in the middle of historic moments represented by photos from the collection of the [Nashville Public Library’s Civil Rights Reading Room](#).

The installation will be located on the west side of the historic Metro Nashville Courthouse, steps away from the historic April 19, 1960 student-led protest that led then-Mayor Ben West to disavow segregation of Nashville’s lunch counters.

“In my teaching and my practice, I am committed to the development of environments which reflect their place and time specifically through how people inhabit various geographies,” Hood stated in his artist philosophy.

Hood, a native of Charlotte, N.C., received his college degree from North Carolina A&T State University. Currently, he lives in Oakland, Calif., and is a professor at the University of California, Berkeley’s Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design Department, which he chaired from 1998 to 2002. His studio practice, [Hood Design](#), has been engaged in environmental design, urban design, art installations, and research commissions since 1992.

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“Walter Hood’s design, utilizing the iconic photos of the Civil Rights movement in Nashville, honors the events and the people who made history here and created the blueprint for nonviolent protest. It will be a beautiful landmark for people to learn what happened in our city during that time and a wonderful addition to our public art collection,” said Jennifer Cole, executive director of Metro Arts.

As visitors walk through Hood’s “Witness Walls,” they will encounter different actors coming in and out of focus with numerous images etched into concave and convex walls by a “graphic concrete” technology. The convex and concave protrusions of the walls guide visitors through different historic aspects of Nashville’s Civil Rights movement and different physical experiences as the walls bend towards and away from one another, according to Hood’s design concept. In addition to the stamped concrete walls, the preliminary design also includes three small reflective fountains and the use of audio, possibly music reflective of the time period.

Once Metro Arts finalizes a contract with Hood Studios, a timetable for additional public meetings with the artist will be announced, Cole said.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0i4y6vgvhpr41jr/B0JbxGaR2e>

Metro’s New Buildings Pay for Public Art

The Civil Rights History project is part of a larger initiative designed to build Nashville’s public art collection and to enrich the lives of all Nashvillians. In 2000, a Metro ordinance was passed that earmarks one percent of the net proceeds from general obligation bonds issued for new or major renovation construction of Metro facilities, to be set aside for the creation of new public art projects.

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About the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission (Metro Arts)

The Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission is a commission of the Metropolitan Nashville Government, provides leadership that stimulates and advances the arts to enrich the human experience for the community. Metro Arts receives operational support from the Tennessee Arts Commission, and additional information is available online at www.artsnashville.org.

